

R. Thompson Smith

NONCONFORMITY VINDICATED,

BEING

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

REV. JOHN ALLEN, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF SALOP.

BY

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NONCONFORMITY VINDICATED,

ETC.

The REV. JOHN ALLEN, M.A.

The Vicarage, Prees.

SIR,

THERE are times in a man's life when silence is the mark of cowardice ; when to speak, and to speak plainly, becomes a duty. It is because I dare not shrink from doing what I conceive to be my duty, that I address this letter to you.

As I am an entire stranger to you, possibly you may expect an apology for the liberty I seem to take in thus claiming your time and attention. I have no apology to offer. Did I regard you in the capacity of a private person, I should be the last to forget one of the simplest courtesies of every-day life ; but I address you in your public character ; and if in sustaining that character you give utterance to your views of truth, I hold that you are open to the public criticism of any man who differs from you, without the shadow of an apology being deemed necessary.

Happily the time is past when our public teachers did not hold themselves amenable to public opinion. The

spirit of dogmatism and the assumption of infallibility are, save with the ignorant, fast becoming relics.

I have from time to time read with considerable interest, a pamphlet issued monthly called the "Prees and Fauls Parish Magazine." I believe that you are the Editor of at least the former portion of this publication. In the March number there are three pages devoted to "Thoughts suggested by the Services held in the Church on Ash-Wednesday, the day set apart in Prees and Fauls for Humiliation on account of the Cattle Plague." In these thoughts I find the following passages occur:—

"All were there,—representatives from nearly every house; Churchmen and Dissenters,—all joined on that day, as common sufferers in a common calamity, as brothers of one family, going up together to lay their wants before their heavenly Father.

"Would that it were always so. Why should brother Christians separate themselves one from another, and stand apart, and set church against church, altar against altar? God is not the author of this confusion, nor can it work the will of God; 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.'—Mark iii. 25.

"Unity is strength, division is weakness; *Satan* knows that, and so he brings division amongst us, and splits up the Church into sects and parties, rending Christ's body, grieving God's Holy Spirit.

"Surely that solemn service on Ash-Wednesday should teach us 'seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are *in by our unhappy divisions*;' surely, it should make us long to be 'all of one heart and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity;' that so we might ever meet together as we did on that day, 'with one mind and one mouth to glorify God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

On carefully considering these passages, I am able to see that you believe the following propositions:—

Firstly—That there are Uniformity and Unity in the Church of England.

Secondly—That Nonconformists disturb this Unity, and therefore are schismatics.

Thirdly—That Satan is the author of Dissent.

It is because I believe every one of these statements to be utterly false, that I conceive it to be my duty publicly to address this letter to you.

No argument has been so much used in favour of the Church of England as that based upon the fact of her Uniformity and Unity. It is a sword that is never put into its scabbard; it is kept sharp and bright, ready to the hand, to smite the enemy at a moment's notice. If a Nonconformist has dared in this neighbourhood to point out any flaw in the Establishment, it has been thought sufficient to cover every fault, to condone every offence, and to be an atonement for every wrong, that the "Church of England" presents to the world an unbroken and undivided unity. This is the glory and the boast of Churchmen. This is the halo which, so long as it encircles the head of "Our Mother Church," proves at once her right and divinity. In face of such an argument, who amongst us dare say a word? This Uniformity is the conclusive evidence that the Church of England is the Church of Christ.

On the other hand, look at the incoherency of Dissent. Division—division—division!

That *cannot* be right in which there is so little uniformity. Nonconformity simply means multiformity—Dissent is only another way of spelling *dissension*. What greater condemnation can we have than this? What stronger proof of our unscripturalness and sin do we need? Men who cannot see this, can see nothing—they are blind—blind leaders of the blind, both falling into the pit.

This is the Churchman's way of putting things. With a sneer upon his lip, with sarcasm hardly covered, and

with the feeling of having won an easy victory, he turns from us, and going home, instead of building castles in the air, he builds a church and a chapel, side by side, but upon wholly different bases. The church rises in its strength, a very emblem of endurance, and it is built upon a *rock*: the chapel looks at best but shaky and transient, for, alas! it is built upon the sand. The rock, to use your own words, is "*unity*," the sand, "*division*."

As I shall have to speak of this sand hereafter, I wish to look very attentively at this rock. Will you, my dear Sir, look at it with me? I may not be geologist enough to speak confidently as to the kind of stone of which it consists, nor of the stratum whence it has been dug. I may not be able to tell you whether the rock is sandstone, or grit or marble, but surely I have the power to say, "This is rock," or "This is not rock." And, using the faculties God has given me, I desire to see the Uniformity of the Church. If it can be shown to me, as clearly as sometimes I am told it can, I confess it is a mighty argument in your favour. I must then look for it either in practice, in faith, or in spirit. If it is to be found anywhere, it is here. Let us *search*.

Fifty years ago I might have wandered from the Wash to Cardigan Bay, or from Holy Island to Lizard Point, and should have found uniformity of worship in the Established Churches. The same forms, the same ceremonies, the same rituals, the same prayers—everywhere the self-same service. In entering a church in those days the stranger had no doubt as to what he would see and hear, no anxiety troubled him about innovations, changes and the like; for wherever he went he knew what to expect.

Is it so to-day? Does this uniformity exist among you now? Your Church supplies the answer, in a loud, distinct, emphatic "*No*." Wherever else I may look for it, in your

worship I search for it in vain. In one parish I enter the church and find everything as in days of old. Generations have passed away, and are silently resting round the sacred edifice. In the bosom of the church they were reared, in the bosom of the church they died. Could I by some miracle call back the departed, touch the dust that it should live again, and taking the hand of the awakened sleeper, lead him once more into the house of God, in which he had been wont to worship, how the old associations would come rushing and crowding into his heart. It would not be the same congregation on which he gazed; it would not be the same minister to whom he listened, but he would hear the same prayers in which in bygone days he had approached the mercy seat; *everything* would be unchanged. He would feel how familiar the preaching was to him. The old tale, "Christ, Christ crucified, Christ risen;" yes, he would remember it all.

But would this be the case universally? Alas! for your uniformity, truth must out. I answer in the words not of a Nonconformist; out of the mouth of the Church herself must she be judged. If your uniformity of worship be a *fact*, how is it that in October last I find an association* of churchmen thus describing the position of the Church:—

"Symbolical pageantry, gorgeous costumes, altar decorations, lighted candles in open day, crosses, images, an excessive amount of music, unintelligible intoning, processions, incense, imitation of the Romish mass, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, sealed confession, and priestly absolution; in fact, reliance on outward forms and ceremonies are usurping the place of spiritual religion *and the pure simplicity of Protestant worship.*"

Mr. Charles Groves, of Liverpool, addressing a Church assembly in February last, says:—

* The Association for promoting a Revision of the Prayer-book.

“It is obvious that under cover of priestly vestments and elaborate symbolism, the blasphemous idolatry of the mass, for the rejection of which our reformers yielded up their lives, is being introduced into our churches and taught in our pulpits. In a small licensed building, not a mile hence, sufficiently notorious, many of the practices, such as the popish one of burning incense—it is scandalous that it was ever allowed; though our bishop forbade it, it was continued more or less after he forbade it—lighted candles in open day, and the confessional, have long prevailed, to the great scandal of our Church.”

If uniformity of worship is your boast, why should Dr. Taylor ask at the same meeting?—

“Are the churches to be regarded as the private property of the clergyman to play what pranks he pleases in? No! certainly not. And therefore are we here this evening, at least so far as I am concerned, simply to protest against the introduction of unauthorised rites and ceremonies into the Church. To give an example—On the 25th of December last, Christmas Day, in the church of St. Mary Magdalene, London, 150 candles were burning upon or in immediate vicinity of the altar. Moreover there was a great procession, preceded by the churchwardens bearing their stars of office; then came the incense bearers, waving their incense pots, proceeding along the church; then the celebrant priest, with his garment peculiar. Incense was used to the Gospel and at the singing of the Introit.”

He may well add—

“No less than 3,000 clergymen have sent an address to the Archbishop deprecating any attempt being made to put down this ritualistic movement. Now, if 3,000 clergymen have signed that address, it shows to what an alarming state of things we have come, and it will get worse and worse; and you may expect the most disastrous consequences to our Church if something is not done to put a stop to this extreme ritualism.”

In reference to this extreme ritualism I find the Bishop of Oxford says:—

"I deem it unpardonable that we who are charged with the all-important work of seeking to save souls for which Christ died, should arrest our energies and estrange the hearts of our people by giving ourselves up to such *childish frivolity*. Such attempts on the one hand breed in some weak minds a longing for the gorgeous ritual, and then for the corrupt doctrines of Rome, and on the other hand, tend far more widely to alienate our people from sound Church of England opinions."

Surely, Sir, you are aware that the *Church Times* has just been shouting "*Victory*." A supplement was published the other day devoted entirely to the mentioning of cases in which ritualism is developing. Never, we are told, was Good Friday observed since the days of the Reformation, as it has been this year; never, in fact, for 300 years has the Church of England risen so gloriously from the dust as she has now done. To read the *Church Times*, one would imagine that all that is needed to bring back the golden age, is to lead back the Church of England to the practices of the Church of Rome, and to undo the awful mischief of the Reformation.

But in language and earnestness that ought to warn men from striking on this rock, Dr. Lowe said only a few weeks ago, in Liverpool:—

"Christian husbands, Christian fathers, and Christian brothers, beware of the setting up of the confessional. It is the stronghold of popery and semi-popery, and as you value the confidence, and the light, and the frankness, and the love of your happy, holy, joyous English homes; as you value all that is dear unto you as Englishmen, as Christians, and as men; as you value your civil liberties and your glorious religious Protestant principles, *insist upon it that there shall be no confessional*—no private confessional, or priestly absolution set up in the Church of England."

But if my memory serve me aright, it is not very long since I saw that a clergyman, not twenty miles from *your*

own parish was (in a magazine) urging the desirableness and utility of private confession upon his parishioners.

In the March number of your magazine, you hint that it is a sin not to observe Lent. To read *your* words, I should suppose that Lent is observed throughout England in all the churches. Uniformity, of which you boast, demands it. The Dissenters may neglect it; but all Churchmen are one here. Then how does it happen that I light upon the following? It is a letter extracted from a Church newspaper of March 31st, and headed, "A Case for the Bishop of London:"—

"To the EDITOR of ———"

"SIR,—A great deal has been said of late about ritual irregularities; and the wearers of chasubles and the burners of incense have met with no small share of abuse. Will you, then, allow me to call attention to a very decided case of irregularity which surely cannot be passed over by those advocates of uniformity who are opposed to what is called extreme ritualism?

"At St. Paul's, Onslow Square, which the notice board informs us is a parish church, there was no service on Ash-Wednesday; nor is it the custom there to observe the season of Lent in any way. *The Incumbent, I hear, does not consider that Christians are called upon to observe Lent*, and of course according to this reasoning our whole system of fasts and festivals falls to the ground. If such an objection is allowed to hold good when taken by Puritan clergymen, how can the Bishop of London expect to put down any development of ritualism, however gorgeous? If a Low Church Incumbent may break the order of the Universal Church on the ground of private opinion, I think it would be very difficult to conceive any point on which even ultra-ritualists may be safely attacked.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours, &c.

"A CHURCHMAN."

Now, Mr. Allen, I must ask you if this is *rock*? We, "poor Dissenter," have had some ugly stones thrown at us for our want of uniformity. This has been cast into our teeth again and again. How unfavourable has been the comparison to the Nonconformists, when church and chapel have been contrasted from this point? And now what have we lived to see? Simply this—that you cannot walk through a single county but, if you are a High Churchman, you will be disgusted with the simple worship of the Evangelical clergyman, and if you are a Low Churchman, you will be pained, wounded, mortified, by the ritualism of the Tractarian.

You are no longer sure, in entering a church, what you will meet with. Uniformity is dead and buried, and you may in the same parish find one clergyman preaching "Christ and Him crucified," and another preaching "The Church and the Sacraments."

When, therefore, you say, "Unity is strength, division is weakness," and ask, "Why should brother Christians separate themselves one from another, and stand apart, and set church against church, altar against altar?"—if you mean that we Nonconformists are guilty of this, I can only point you to your own Church, with its now heterogeneous worship, and commend to your serious consideration the old adage, "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

I am, however, ready to admit that uniformity here is not of vital consequence. The external matters little if unity and uniformity be found elsewhere. The boast of the Church of England has been that she possesses oneness in her teaching. Her faith has been marked out plainly for her. The truth has been sifted, and sifted by her councils, synods and the like, so that she possesses nothing now but the pure gold. In our chapels what a

different picture is presented. Doctrines as opposite as the poles, are there preached. One Nonconformist minister teaches election, another scouts it; one believes in free will, another denies it; one declares that justification is instantaneous, another declares it is not; one clings to original sin, another condemns the doctrine as unscriptural; one holds to universal redemption, another to particular; one teaches believers' baptism, another the baptism of infants. In a small tract called, "Six short Sermons on Church and Chapel," which I believe Mr. Meynell has thought fit to circulate in his parish, I read:—

"Do you call yourselves members of the Church? If so, you pray this prayer, 'from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, good Lord deliver us;' and can you pray this prayer in church and then go to chapel? Leaders in a chapel often deceive both themselves and their hearers by getting up a few texts out of the Bible, and perpetually ringing the changes upon them; but how they content themselves with those few texts, as if they were the whole of Divine truth, an humble-minded Christian may well doubt."

No, no! Nonconformity gives a very uncertain sound in blowing the Gospel trumpet; if you want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, you must come to church. The diversity of opinion is the sand of Dissent; the unity of opinion is the rock of the Establishment. Granted that as to the form of worship there is now some *slight* difference; there can be none whatever as to the teaching of the Church. Has not the Prayer-book settled everything? Has not every clergyman in England solemnly, and in the sight of Him who knoweth the heart, accepted all and everything contained in the Prayer-book and Canons as matters of personal conviction and faith? With such a light in the hand there can be no darkness; with such a guide there can be no doubt; with such a standard there can be no deflection from the truth. I

come, then, to examine this rock, the *unity* of the Church's teaching. Let the Church be her own witness.

In the eye of a Churchman *I* have no right to preach. Whatever qualification I may have given me of God for the sacred office, I lack the one thing needful. No bishop's hands have been laid upon my head; no "Holy Spirit" has been solemnly bestowed upon me. I can boast of no so-called Apostolical succession. I have, by clergymen in my own parish, been called "an unauthorised minister."

The Church teaches me by one of her articles that—

"It is not lawful for any man to take upon himself the office of public preaching, or administering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And these we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which He hath chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given to them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

As to this public authority I am informed—

"The Lord Jesus Christ gave His Spirit to His Apostles; they in turn laid their hands on those who should succeed them, and so the sacred gift has been handed down to our present bishops."*

Again, I read—

"A person who denies the Apostolical succession of the ministry, because it is not clearly taught in the Scriptures, ought, if consistent, to deny the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, which is nowhere literally stated in Scripture."†

Again—

"The bishops stand in the place of the Apostles, as far as the office of sealing is concerned. This is faith—to be sure that *the bishop is Christ's appointed representative, as if we actually saw Him work miracles as Peter did.*"‡

* Oxford Tracts, No. 1.

Tract No. 85.

† *Ibid.* No. 10.

“The gift of the Holy Ghost has been preserved to the world *solely* by means of the Episcopal succession, and that to seek communion with Christ by any other channel is to attempt an impossibility.”*

A clergyman writes that—

“An ordinary enquirer may trace the line of succession throughout, and that the learned investigators may examine its minutest details.”†

“The ministers of the Church of England are all of them ordained by bishops, who alone have authority to send labourers *into Christ’s vineyard, since they are the successors of the Apostles.*”

I might quote more as to the teaching of some clergymen on this point. If any one wants a sample of bigotry, assumption, and ignorance combined, pray let him read a tract called “The Danger of Dissent,” and he will there see the doctrine of Apostolical succession full-blown, and carried out to its logical consequences. And I need scarcely say to you, Sir, that if the Church of England is right in this matter, ours is a most pitiable condition. Do all her ministers teach this? Thank God, no! There are some left who cannot swallow the camel altogether, and so I find myself reading—

“There is *no certainty* who was Bishop of Rome next to the Apostles; and, therefore, the Romanists build upon an ill-bottom, when they lay so great weight on their present succession.”

The Rev. J. E. Riddle says:—

“It is *impossible* to prove the present succession of modern bishops, in an unbroken episcopal line from the Apostles or men of the apostolic age. As a matter of history and fact, apostolic succession, in this acceptation of the term, *is an absolute nonentity*. Call it a theory, a fiction, a vision, or whatever you choose, you cannot give it a name too shadowy and unsubstantial. In itself, it is an empty sound.”

* Keble’s Froude’s Remains.

† Reasons for being a Churchman.

Archbishop Whately tells us—

“ Even in the memory of persons living there existed a bishop, concerning whom there was so much mystery and uncertainty prevailing as to when, where, and by whom he had been ordained, that doubts existed in the minds of many persons whether he had ever been ordained at all.”

As if to prove the agreement of the teaching of the Church of England, in the “ Oxford Tract ” (No. 7) I find—

“ As to the *fact* of apostolical succession, this is too notorious to require proof. (How easy to assert when there is no proof!) Every link in the chain is known, from St. Peter to our present Metropolitan.”

Dr. Comber, whom I have just quoted, says, “ There is no certainty who was Bishop of Rome next to the Apostles.” The “ Oxford Tract ” says, “ Every link in the chain is known.” Wonderful agreement ! I then read—

“ There is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up, with any approach to certainty, his own spiritual pedigree. The sacramental virtue dependent on the imposition of hands, with the due observance of apostolical usages, by a bishop, himself duly consecrated, after having been in like manner baptised into the Church, and ordained deacon and priest ; this sacramental virtue, if a single link of the chain be faulty, must, on the above principles, be utterly nullified ever after, in respect of all the links that hang on that one. For if a bishop has not been duly consecrated, or had not been, previously, rightly ordained, his ordinations are null ; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him ; and their ordination of others (supposing any of the persons ordained by him to attain to the episcopal office) ; and so on, without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite and inconceivable extent.

“ And who can undertake to pronounce, that during that long period usually designated as the Dark Ages, no such taint ever

was introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded without a perpetual miracle; and that no such miraculous interference existed, we have even historical proof. Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and practice, and gross superstitions that crept in during those ages, we find recorded descriptions, not only of the profound ignorance and profligacy of life of many of the clergy, but also of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of bishops consecrated when mere children; of men officiating who barely knew their letters; of prelates expelled, and others put into their places, by violence; of illiterate and profligate laymen and habitual drunkards admitted to holy orders; and, in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder, and reckless disregard of the decency which the Apostle enjoins. It is inconceivable that anyone, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that, amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to by men,—many of them openly profane and secular,—unrestrained by public opinion through the gross ignorance of the populace among whom they lived; and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained, was admitted to sacred offices.”

This is from the pen of Archbishop Whately. So some clergymen believe and teach “Apostolical succession,” some do not believe it, whilst others do not even think it possible that men *can* believe it. Truly I do not see the strength of agreement here.

I now turn to what is usually called the “Athanasian Creed.” Without dwelling on the question whether Athanasius wrote this creed, or whether it is (as some have supposed it to be) an Arian burlesque upon the teaching of Athanasius, I come to that which is of more vital importance than its authorship, I mean its *meaning*. I confess I have read it over and over again. I have pondered over it sentence by sentence, and my deliberate conviction is, that there is not a man in the whole world who can understand it, much less explain it. It professes to

announce the true doctrine of the Trinity, but when I read "The Father was made of none, neither created nor born: the Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, *but born*: the Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor born, *but proceeding*;" and that "The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal," and ask the simple question, How can that which is born be eternal? and, How can that which proceedeth be eternal? the answer I get is, that the doctrine is *incomprehensible*! And whilst I am wondering what is the good of a statement of so-called truth which is unintelligible, I light upon the teaching of the Church of England, awful as it is. "This is the Catholic faith, which unless a man believe faithfully, he *cannot* be saved," and also that "unless a man shall keep this faith whole and entire, *without doubt, he shall perish everlastingly*." The creed itself is as misty and dark as contradictions can make it, but the curse and condemnation are plain as day. This Athanasian Creed has been accepted, *verbatim et literatim*, by every clergyman in the Church. As I am told that I shall be damned if I do not hold this Catholic faith, whole and entire, without doubt, I tremblingly ask the Church of England to tell me what I am to believe. I pray you listen, Sir, with me to the reply. Here it is—

"The words of the Athanasian Creed mean not in this age the same thing which they meant in ages past."

The clergyman who tells me this, tells me also—

"I do not presume to say that in a future state of existence yea, even here upon this earth, there shall not be given to the soul an intellectual conception of the Almighty, a vision of the Eternal, in whose brightness and clearness our present knowledge of the *Trinity* shall be as rudimentary and as childlike as

the knowledge of the Jew was, in comparison with the knowledge of the Christian."

Another luminary of the Church of England gives me this light—

"All men agree to understand these clauses in a *modified* and *limited* sense. There does not exist the man who would apply them quite literally to the person, at all events, of him who *doubts* or *differs* from some of the details of doctrine to which they are appended."

This, then, seems to me the teaching of the Church. The Athanasian Creed does not mean to-day what it meant in past ages; it will not mean in the future what it means to-day; men may doubt or differ from some of the details of doctrine, and yet this is the Catholic faith "which, unless a man shall keep *whole* and *entire*, he shall perish everlastingly."

Pray, Sir, where is the *rock* here? Oh! the strength of the agreement in the teachings of the Church!

Once more, Sir, I must beg you to attend whilst I look at a much more solemn and important truth. As a poor sinner, your Church puts a book called the Bible into my hands, and tells me that it is the "*Word of God*." Why call it the "*Word of God*," I ask? The answer is, "Because it is *inspired*." As my salvation rests on my acceptance or rejection of this book, I am naturally anxious to know what you mean by its being inspired, and by its being the "*Word of God*."

The Oxford Declaration says—

"The Catholic Church maintains, without reserve or qualification, the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the whole Canonical Scripture."

The Archbishop of Canterbury says—

"I am in no wise called upon to attempt *any* definition of Inspiration, seeing that the Church has not thought fit to prescribe one."

The Archbishop of York says—

"The Church has laid down *no* theory of Inspiration: she has always had in her bosom *teachers of at least two different theories.*"

(Agreement here!)

"We heartily concur with the majority of our opponents," says the "Aids to Faith," "in rejecting all theories of inspiration."

(I thought the Church *had no theory.*)

The Bishop of St. David's says—

"Our Church has never *attempted* to determine the nature of the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture."

(What a shame, then!)

Dr. Temple says—

"We are constrained to withhold our unqualified acceptance of *any* theory of Inspiration which should claim for these compilers exemption from the oscitancy, and generally from the infirmities of humanity!"

The Rev. C. A. Swainson, M.A. says—

"The almost unanimous voice of Christendom rejects the thought that the books are merely human; but yet the considerations I laid before you, as clearly show that they are not all purely divine."

The Rev. J. W. Burgon, M.A. says—

"This day's sermon has had for its object to remind you that the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne; every book of it; every chapter of it; every verse of it; every word of it; every syllable of it; *every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High.*

Mr. Wilson says—

“Under the terms of the sixth article, one may accept *literally* or *allegorically*, or as *parable*, or *poetry*, or *legend*, the story of the serpent tempter,” (wide latitude allowed here and yet “every letter is the direct utterance of the Most High.”)

Last, but not least, as an evidence of the uniformity of the teaching of the Church, the Rev. C. A. Swainson, M.A., Prebendary of Chichester, whom I have already quoted, says—

“I know of no work on the subject of inspiration that I *dare* place in the hands of a student of theology. I know of none which, even to a young man of ordinary acuteness, does not suggest greater difficulties than it removes.”

I glance for a moment at that cardinal doctrine—the centre of religious truth—the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hundreds of the clergy preach Sabbath after Sabbath that His death was vicarious, substitutionary, and expiatory. I need not enlarge. You know, Sir, as well as I do, what is involved in these terms. Judge of my astonishment when in taking up a volume of sermons preached by an English clergyman, I read—

“It is assumed that Christ was conscious, by His omnipotence, of the sins of mankind—that they were present to His mind in that awful hour *as if they were His own*. This is *utterly* unscriptural—it is *fanciful*—it is *sentimental*. To say that His conscience was oppressed with the responsibility of sins which He had not committed, is to confound a state of sanity with the delusions of a half-lucid mind, and the workings of a healthy conscience with those of one unnatural and morbid.”

The writer of this view of divine truth has passed away to his reward, leaving as a legacy to the world four volumes of sermons. It is not for me to give even an

opinion of that which he has bequeathed to us; but I cannot refrain from quoting as an apt illustration of the *uniformity* of views in the Church of England, one or two reviews of his works.

The *Church Remembrancer* says—

“We should be glad if all preachers preached such sermons as these.”

The *Saturday Review*, which, when it appears as a representative of religion, takes a Church view of things, says—

“There are many persons, [and the number increases] every year, to whom Robertson’s writings are the most *stable, satisfactory, and exhaustless* form of religious teaching, which the nineteenth century has given, the most wise, suggestive, and practical.”

The *Church of England Monthly Review* says—

“It is hardly too much to say that had the Church of England produced no other fruit in the present century, this work alone would be amply sufficient to acquit her of the charge of barrenness. . . . We recommend such of our readers as have not yet made their acquaintance, to read them carefully and thoughtfully, and they will find in them *more* deeply suggestive matter than in almost any book published in the present century.”

So far there seems to be agreement. Here is rock at last. All are agreed on *this*, the excellence of Mr. Robertson’s sermons. Horrible! just as I am congratulating myself on this “unity of opinion,” the *Record* makes discord. This is the string it plays.

“Mr. Robertson’s sermons are *unsound* on the inspiration of the Word of God (I have just been told that the Church of England had no theory of inspiration), on the doctrine of the Christian Sabbath, and on almost every doctrine of importance you can name. *A worse book to recommend to young or old you could hardly find.*”

Why need I make a single comment? Does any man for a moment believe that the Church of England is *agreed* in her teaching? when hundreds of clergymen denounce the sacramental efficacy; when hundreds more believe in it; when the *Record* says of the preaching of the Evangelicals, "It is raising their hearers to the gates of heaven;" and of the preaching of the Tractarians, "It is leading them down to the chambers of death;" when the *Union Review* says, "We venture to say that heresy has been practically triumphant for three hundred years together *through the Prayer-book*;" when the Court of Arches decides that both the High Church and the Low Church doctrines of Baptism are in harmony with the doctrine of the Church of England; when in numerous instances in the same town you hear from the clergy of the same Church that baptism regenerates, and that it does not regenerate; when Colenso, Wilson, Pusey, Jowett, Robertson, are found side by side, "brother clergymen;" when you have Low Churchmen, High Churchmen, Broad Churchmen, Calvinists, Arminians, Swedenborgians, Unitarians and Infidels,* in the same "Catholic Church." I do really wonder, Sir, to find you daring to give the Dissenters a blow by writing the words "Unity is strength—division is weakness;" if thereby you mean that there is unity in the Church of England and division among the Nonconformists.

* I should have hesitated to write "Unitarians and Infidels," had I not seen that Dr. Colenso has again and again been stigmatised as an infidel by the Church press. As to Unitarians being in the Church of England, the following extract out of *John Bull* will suffice:—

"A NEW CLERICAL TRIAL.—A correspondent informs us that the Rev. Charles Voysey, the incumbent of Healaugh, Yorkshire, is the clergyman spoken of in *The Church Times* as having delivered a sermon affirming that our Lord was the son of the blessed Virgin and Joseph. It is said that the Archbishop of York will not himself proceed, but that two laymen and a clergyman will institute proceedings. The patron of the living is alleged to be a follower of Bishop Colenso."

I must now very briefly speak of that *unity*, without which the religion of the Saviour becomes a scoff and a byeword to the world. Not the union of forms, not the union of teachings, but the union of *hearts*. The whole genius of the New Testament is contained in that one word *love*. If I have read my Bible aright, I find that a man may be a professor of religion, a preacher and teacher of the Gospel, a dignitary in the Church; still the touchstone of his Christianity is, Has he love? If he does not love the brethren (*i.e.* all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in truth) he may have talent, wealth, genius, influence, but he has not Christ. I am not about to ask you if the clergymen of the Church of England love Dissenters; as for that, actions speak louder than words; but I *am* going to ask you if they love each other?

If I may take the Church papers as exponents of the feelings of the different parties in the pale of the Church of England, I come to the conclusion that they very cordially *hate each other*.

Nor am I alone in this opinion. The Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, speaking of the TEN hostile parties in the Establishment, says:—

“The want of ‘mutual love’ between these parties, and the manner in which they write and speak of each other, are lamentable enough. The *cause* of their mutual *fury* is to be found in their unnatural union. They are like two dogs coupled together against their will, wrenching and tugging against each other because they want to go different ways. Meanwhile the effect of their dissensions, their mutual denunciations, their prosecutions, their counter-prosecutions, their exaggerated insistence on contested dogmas, and consequent neglect of admitted truths, is such as the religious faith of the people will not long withstand. *National scepticism is its inevitable result.*”

This is a fearful indictment. Could a Dissenter have penned a more bitter accusation? Could he have deli-

neated a sadder picture? If I were a Churchman, such a description of the Church of England would for ever shut *my* mouth and seal *my* lips on the subject of the unity of that Church, the weakness and division of Dissent.

Goldwin Smith wrote the above five years ago; and as a proof that things are not improved, but are much worse, let me submit "a sign of the times" to you. There is a paper of world-wide fame, which professes to be a faithful reflection of the course of events in England. Will you turn, Sir, to *Punch* of February 24th, 1866, and there you will behold one of the most mournfully suggestive pictures ever drawn. It is called "*The Battle of the Rubric.*" I think every one who sneers at Dissent because of its divisions, should procure and keep this drawing. Am I, as a Nonconformist, to accept the faces as an index to the feelings cherished by Churchmen? The scorn, contempt, the insolence and flashing anger of the eyes—do these really exist in the High Churchman's bosom—the dogged, defiant, prize-fighting sort of feeling, marked in the Low Churchman's countenance—does this really exist in his heart? if so, I can heartily put up the prayer: "From such a *union*, good Lord deliver *us*."

What a picture for the world to gaze upon. The teachers of the people, the expounders of the Gospel, the so-called successors of the Apostles, the disciples of the meek and lowly One, exhibiting such a scene before the world! Well may Goldwin Smith say, "It is such as the religious faith of the people will not long withstand. National scepticism is its inevitable result."

I would fain have hoped the picture was overdrawn. Let one fact suffice to prove that it is not. Just one month after the cartoon had appeared in *Punch*, I read in the *Church Times* (March 31st)—

"That on Thursday, the 22nd inst., the notorious Protestant lecturer, Dr. Blakeney, delivered a lecture at the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, on 'Ritualism.' The platform was crowded with an array of the most bigoted Puritan clergymen, with the exception of the Revs. Jas. Hunt and B. Morrell, the only Catholic priests who were present.

"After a short speech from the Bishop, Dr. Blakeney came forward and was received with cheers, drowned by hisses. He at once produced the 'Directorium Anglicanum,' upon the sight of which the cheering was deafening, and seemed to give the tone to the rest of the evening's proceeding, quite disconcerting the Anti-ritualists. He proceeded amidst cheering, hissing, and interruption, to read a critique upon the book, published in the *Church Times*, and found it difficult to proceed, owing to the great cheering which immediately followed the mention of the *Church Times*. He then read from the 'Directorium' instructions relative to the furniture of the altar amidst great confusion.

"Upon this the Rev. J. W. Hunt, Incumbent of Northmoor church, near Bridgewater, rose up, and addressing the right rev. chairman, said, 'I beg to ask you as a bishop of the Church of England, whether you are in place, in promoting a scene like this during Passion Week?' This question was not answered, but it called to their feet several persons on the platform, one of whom, the Rev. E. Young, rushed up to Mr. Hunt, *struck him in the face, called him a liar, scoundrel, and villain.*"

But why quote more? Such a scene tells its own tale. Let us in mercy ring the bell, and let down the curtain to hide the stage, and turn away sick and sad at heart because that in actual life we have found the picture which we had hoped was not real.

Believe me, Sir, it pains me to have to write thus—to bring forward such facts; but it is time that some one in this neighbourhood showed the hollowness of the frequent comparison between the oneness of the Church of England, and the divisions of Nonconformists. The Church of England is *not one*, neither in her practice, her teaching, or her spirit: forms as opposite as the poles; teaching as

incongruous as light and darkness, and a spirit—the spirit of heaven, aye, and the spirit of the pit are found cherished in her pale. I am not now called upon to defend the divisions of Nonconformity. I shall not shrink from the task if it should be imposed upon me; all I am called to do is to show the utter falseness and absurdity of your position in supposing that we can *believe* that which is contrary to our reason and common sense. For I defy you, divided into sects though we are, to find anywhere such want of union or uniformity amongst *us*. You will search for it in vain. Though we make no boast of it, though we say very little about it, we humbly thank God that between us, the Baptists, the Independents, the Methodists, the Primitive Methodists, and the other Christian denominations of our land, there is a bond of Christian unity, a oneness of heart, for which we look in vain in the Church of England. The last fifty years have had a directly opposite effect upon the two systems. They have smoothed down animosities, they have seen the burial of rivalries, and amongst the Nonconformists they have produced a brotherly love and kindness, which are the grandest proof of God being with us, and the surest pledge of our success. Alas! what has the half century done for the Establishment? Let Dr. Sewell give the answer:—

“Progress, the spread of knowledge, sound criticism, all are bearing us onward upon a course of which none can see the end; only we can discern that we are slipping from our moorings; and the land on which we stood firm, the solid clearly discerned ground of objective truth, is shifting before us. God only knows how rapidly is coming upon us, rising out of a little cloud no bigger than a man’s hand, the storm of whirlwind and tempest which will destroy the very principles of faith from the face of the earth.”

These are the words of the late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford. Strange that two prophets from the same school should arise, the one to prophesy a tempest in the Church which "will destroy every principle of faith," and the other to prophesy that the effect of the present disunion of that Church must be national scepticism.

Yes, Sir! you may shut your eyes if you like. You may cry peace! peace! in the Church; you may ring out from every church-pulpit in the land the sacred word of "Unity;" you may blazon it on every standard that you uprear; you may scornfully cast it into the teeth of your Nonconformist neighbours; you may preach "The Temple, the Temple of the Lord are we;" you may count us sinners and schismatics, and wrap your cloak closer around you as you coldly pass by "those who cause divisions;" but all will not avail you; the truth is out at last; the sore which has been festering year after year now breaks into public view, and *facts*, stern, hard, unyielding, which admit of no varnishing, too rugged to be ever smoothed, incontestably prove that there is about as much union in the parties of the Church of England as there was in the bosoms of the gladiators who fought for life in the Roman amphitheatre. You are all bound round by the cold iron circle of subscription: they were bound by the ring in which they fought; and if you can by any stretch of the imagination, by any twisting or distorting of language, by any conception however monstrous, tell us that the men who fought with the fury and hate of tigers in their heart gave to the world an apt illustration of "Uniformity and Unity," then, but not till then, will it become a Church minister to forget the sects, divisions, discords, jealousies, and contentions of his own Church, and turning to the Nonconformist world, brand

them as those "who separate themselves one from another, stand apart, set church against church and altar against altar."

In face of what I have said, I may solemnly ask the question, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

I now come to your second charge against us, viz. that we disturb the unity of the *Church*, and are therefore schismatics. You speak of those who set altar against altar and church against church. You are aware, Sir, that there are many ways of meeting an opponent. The best way, unfortunately, is not the easiest. That to which I refer is meeting an opponent fairly, honestly, logically, using no weapons save those which are furnished by the truth. This is seldom the manner, I am sorry to say, in which we Nonconformists are met. Either our swords are sharper than yours, or your shields are weaker than ours, I know not which; but this I do know, that, especially in such neighbourhoods as this, this mode of warfare is eschewed by those belonging to the Establishment. A far more easy way, and the one generally adopted, is to fight without using truth, or facts, or arguments at all. With a certain class of minds, abuse, simple abuse, is the best weapon which can be used. I think, Sir, that you will agree with me that it is easier to call us names, to use opprobrious terms in speaking of us, than to *prove* that we deserve these names.

Nonconformity in the town and city, and Nonconformity in an agricultural district, are two different things. The attitude of the Church of England towards it differs accordingly. In the town and city Nonconformists are

treated with respect, they are strangers to the word toleration, they are the *equals* of those who differ from them. Were the Church of England to attempt to assume in these large centres of business and wealth any superior position, or to manifest any unfriendly spirit, it would be at the risk of her own influence, and would doubtless be the most suicidal policy she could adopt. I cannot stop to ask the reason for this, it is sufficient for me that this is the fact.

But we have altogether another picture in such districts as ours. The Church here assumes what she dare not assume in the city and the manufacturing town. Nonconformity here is, in the eyes of Churchmen, a bird of quite a different shape and plumage. Hence I find that statements are made, and acts are performed, which I may say are indigenous to the country. Clergymen and Dissenting ministers may stand on the same platform, work side by side in the same work, and exchange the courtesies of life in the town, but hereabouts such a spectacle is unknown. The fact is, we might be lepers, so thoroughly are we shunned. Flowers, cabbages, and grass may flourish in our pure air and glorious sunshine, but there is one plant which seems to need the noise and turmoil, the smoke and impurity of town life for its full development; for no sooner is it brought into this neighbourhood than it sickens, and languishes, and dies. The shadow of the Church is fatal to it here. The name of the plant is CHARITY.

Your charge against us that we "set altar against altar, and church against church," is made in many forms—and in many insulting forms. Here and there, as I am at work, I find tracts are distributed with a liberal hand, most of which contain serious charges against Nonconformists; and often the charges are so very base and

spiteful, that, save with the most bigoted, they are their own surest refutation. I believe that in my own parish, some few months ago, tracts were circulated by those in authority, containing reflections upon Dissenters, which, to the honour of the liberal Churchmen of Whitchurch, be it said, provoked such a feeling of indignation amongst them, that those who issued the tracts were but too glad to withdraw them from public gaze. Before I have done I shall have again to speak of the contents of these tracts. I must now notice the one specific charge brought against us—that we are schismatics. In your parish this charge has been made in the “six short sermons on Church and Chapel.” Accidentally this pamphlet fell into my hands. On the title-page I find it is stated that it is written by a clergyman. I trust this is untrue. The sermons are so poor—logic is so much ignored, and Scripture is so much perverted in them—that I would fain believe that no clergyman *could* write such trash.

Let me give just one passage from these sermons :—

“James and John were very zealous for Christ when they wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, but ‘He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.’ Their spirit was then a *violent and carnal* spirit, although exercised about the honour of Christ. And just, in like manner, many who count themselves very zealous for the Gospel, know not what manner of spirit they are of, when actuated by pride and vanity they use all sorts of arts and schemes to fill the dissenting chapel. Listen to Saint Paul, ‘Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; *and avoid them*. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.’”

Here I find a clergyman bringing the gravest charge which he can well find against us. We “cause divi-

sions" in the Church of Christ; we are "schismatics;" we are "actuated by pride and vanity," and instead of serving our Lord Jesus Christ, "we serve our own belly."

Another clergyman writes:—

"We solemnly warn Dissenters of their *danger*. To set up altar against altar and pulpit against pulpit in the same place, is palpably inconsistent with Christian charity, and must inevitably bring God's displeasure upon them."

And he adds:—

"I do entreat the Dissenter to consider the possible, *nay probable*, consequence of separation. It may have cut him off from the Christian sacraments. There is great doubt whether he has ever been spiritually joined to Christ in baptism; still greater, whether he has ever spiritually eaten and drunk the body and blood of Christ. If not, he has no spiritual life in him; *he may have been all along eating and drinking his own damnation*"!

Such are specimens of "Church literature" distributed in this neighbourhood. "Avoid these schismatics, they are guilty of an awful sin—they are not joined to Christ, they have all along been eating and drinking their own damnation," &c., &c. Alas, Sir! what unfortunate wretches we must be. Can you explain how, that whilst this is the way in which clergymen write and speak of us *here*, I find Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, accepting, only the other day, an invitation to breakfast with the leading Nonconformist ministers in London, and in his speech saying:—

"There are parts of the community which Nonconformists can reach which Churchmen *cannot*: and there are other parts of the community which Churchmen can reach which Nonconformists cannot. Not only at the present time, but in former times, perhaps, more than at present, the debt which the Church

woes to Nonconformists is so great that I am glad to take this opportunity of expressing, in the name of the Church of England, *its sense of obligation*. It is with feelings of *great pleasure* that I meet the present company of Nonconformists. There are very few occasions on which it is possible for me to have such a pleasure."

If the Dean of Westminster lived within ten or a dozen miles of Whitchurch, would his pleasure in meeting with a number of godly, earnest, Christ-serving and Catholic Independent ministers be denied him; and would he be taught to avoid them as schismatics, whose salvation was exceedingly doubtful? But Shropshire and Middlesex are two different counties; and this county fails to produce such grand true-hearted men as Dr. Stanley.

I am not sure that you, Sir, have entered into our *reasons* for being schismatics! Clergymen publish tracts on the "Danger of Dissent," on the "Sin of Schism," and "Reasons for being a Churchman;" but why do none of them dream of looking into *our* reasons for occupying the position which we do in relation to the Church of England? May I ask, if ever you have fully understood that we *could not* be members of the Church of England without sacrificing self-respect—the approval of our own conscience—the approbation of God, and what we believe to be the TRUTH. Instead of our being the schismatics, we *regard* YOU as the cause of all division. We believe that your alliance with the State is wrong—that it has no warrant in the Bible—that it is opposed to the will and teaching of Christ—that it tends more than anything else to retard the progress of the Gospel—that it is the source of heart-burning uncharitableness, bigotry, and sin—that it fosters worldliness, pride, and self-seeking—that it prostitutes the holy religion of our Blessed Saviour, degrading it by infusing into it teachings

utterly alien to the genius of the Gospel; and that there are scores, if not hundreds, of clergymen, and thousands of laymen, in this land, who are beginning to feel how the shackles of this alliance are eating into their very flesh, and who will be ready to bless God with all their heart and soul when that day dawns, that the Church of England, having learned her sad mistake by a sad and bitter experience, will willingly renounce all connection with, and all help from, a power that is her greatest spiritual curse, her most cruel tyrant, and her severest task-master. We do not dissent from your truth—from much of your teaching—from what we find pure and holy and Catholic in the midst of you—but we do dissent, we must ever dissent, with heart and strength from that Church which places a mortal like ourselves in the place of Christ, which robs Him of His sceptre in His Church, and gives it to an earthly monarch—that virtually dethrones Him whose right it is to reign with unlimited power and authority, that makes a Parliament the despot of the Church, and forsaking the fountain of living water and truth which gushes in one perennial stream from His glorious and Divine Word, dares to accept as authoritative teaching, the errors, the follies, and the traditions of men. Our dissent is no mere sentiment—no feeling intense whilst it lasts, but transient as the golden light of the setting sun; no habiliment which we may put on or off at pleasure; and least of all is it the child of vanity and pride and carnal feeling. No! our Nonconformity is something deeper, stronger, and more thorough than the affection and reverence of the most passionate lover of the Church of England for his church, and something for which on our bended knees we thank God, and dare to ask that by our whole life, and teaching, and influence, we may witness even by our “dissent” to the glorious

Gospel, the freedom of the liberty, and the splendour of the light of His Son Jesus Christ. The test of our sincerity is the suffering we have borne, and may yet bear for His truth. Our fathers were imprisoned, robbed, persecuted, vilified, and murdered for their principles; the spirit of the state entering into the so-called Church of Jesus, was wielded with its utmost power to crush and annihilate "Nonconformity;" and deeds were done in the name of religion which makes the human heart to tremble and to bleed; but the gates of hell were powerless and impotent against the witnesses for truth. And believe me, Sir, if the hand of the dial of time could be moved back, and we were called now to suffer for our *Dissent*, so inwrought is it into our being, so interwoven with every chord of our heart, that there are thousands, yea, tens of thousands, of men in this country who would pass through the fire, and *die* rather than occupy the position YOU now hold. I know not, Sir, whether Churchmen feel thus strongly for their views of truth, nor whether they feel thus assured of standing on *rock*, and not on sand; but this I do beseech you to believe, that you may taunt, threaten, persecute, and anathematize; but so long as the Church of England continues to be what Judge Fullerton said she was, "the mere creature of the State," will you have Dissent and Dissenters; for I look upon it that our Nonconformity to you, is our evidence of conformity to Christ. And which we will—which we can—which of these we *dare* resign—judge you!

This is not the time for me to give a statement of reasons why I am a Dissenter. From what I have just said, you will conclude how complete is my dissent, and will also judge that I must have the very weightiest reasons for standing out so thoroughly from your Church. Nothing is so imperative as *truth*, and it is because there

has been presented to me evidence of the unscripturalness of the Church of England—evidence, full, weighty, *sufficient*, that I am found amongst those of whom you say that they “set altar against altar, and church against church.”

Inasmuch, however, as this letter will fall into many other hands beside your own, I cannot let the opportunity wholly pass without saying something of the untenableness of your position in demanding our faith in the Church. I am not going to speak of subscription, nor of the burial service, nor of the hundred and one things, which are points of weakness in your system.

Let me deal with matters which more nearly concern myself. I find that usually in any argument with a Churchman, and especially with a clergyman, other authority than the Bible, is put forward to defend the positions held by Churchmen. In a course of letters which have borne your signature, published in a local newspaper, I find the same thing. In defending the doctrines, &c., of the Church, Chrysostom, Jerome, Cyprian, Tertullian, Origen, and a host of other names are used, whose writings are accepted by Churchmen as an armoury from which defensive weapons can be procured. Now it is a very strange thing, that whilst I find a clergyman writing, “Inquire what the *Apostles* taught eighteen hundred years ago, and do not care to know what was invented by new teachers,” that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the “new teachers” are quoted in preference to the Apostles. It is oftener what “St. Jerome,” or “St. Augustine,” or some other “saint” said, than what the Apostle or Christ said. I believe that the Bible is the *sufficient* as I believe it to be the *only*, authority which can have any weight in our discussions of truth. Moreover the most perplexing difficulty which meets me is

this : that whilst you take all from these "fathers," &c., all which suits your purpose, you leave everything out which tells against you. Why, sir, use them at all? I give you the answer : Because yours is a Church so constituted, so framed, that the New Testament taken alone is wholly against you ; therefore you *do* go to human tradition to help you in your dilemma. I might comment on the inutility of quoting the names of those of whom the majority of people know literally nothing. I might say that if you quoted Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, as a "father," there are many who would not see the error, but I will be content simply to quote what a Churchman says of all these *authorities*, and I wish those who are so fond of quoting from these sources would remember it.

"I challenge," says Isaac Taylor, "all these men to produce from the modern works of sectaries anything so *puerile*, fanciful, foolish, extravagant, and unscriptural, as I shall produce from the writings of the very earliest Fathers, even those called Apostolical."

If, Sir, amongst all the literature of modern times there is nothing so *absurd*, so *puerile*, and so *unscriptural* to be found, as is found in the writings of these "early Fathers," it seems to betray a weakness, of which I will not speak, when the defenders of the Establishment, leaving the Word of God, go hunting up and down and draw arguments from such sources as these.

I have spoken of the so-called "Apostolic Succession." I do not know to what extent you believe in it ; I have, however, quoted what some great men in the Church of England have said of it. However, I find in this neighbourhood that we Nonconformist ministers are looked upon as having no right to preach the Gospel. Clergymen, and clergymen alone, have the "divine right." Of

course I deny it. No episcopal hands have been laid upon my head, no words have been uttered over me which, if they have any meaning, are blasphemous, and if they have no meaning, are a solemn farce; no—I knew not what to call it—has come down to me handed in unbroken succession (!!) from the Apostles. What then? Simply this. I believe that I am as truly called to preach the Gospel of Christ as any clergyman in England; and, moreover, I *know* that I shall stand at the bar of God pleading *a call* to His work, to which many clergymen are utter strangers. The call of God to any work is made manifest by the gift which He bestows on those who work for Him. God gives talents and asks us to use them. If He give a man power to paint, doubtless that man is *called* to be an artist; if He bestow on another the gift of poetry, that man is called to be a poet; and if he give to any one power to preach His Gospel, that man is called to be a minister of His. At our peril we dig the hole in the ground, and place our talents there. This may not be the teaching of the Church of England, but it is the teaching of common sense, and I prefer it. My call boasts of a higher patronage than the imposition of any human hands. I have felt in my own soul, as thousands of Nonconformist ministers have felt, that “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel of Christ;” and God has given me, in His infinite mercy, proof that I am authorised by Him to lift up the cross, by giving me seals to my ministry—less than this I dare not accept as my warrant for standing up as a minister of Christ: more than this I do not desire to have.

But whence come *your* ministers? Whence do they receive their call? Although they state that they are moved by the Holy Ghost to dedicate themselves to His

work, is this true? Your ministers are made by influence and gold, not certainly by God. Livings are bought and given to those who have no other qualification for the sacred office than *the possession of wealth and friends*; whilst if a man lack this influence, he may have everything needful to make him a successful preacher, no living can be his.

Your authority, "Jerome," says that the clergy were chosen by the people, as also the bishops were; and Cyprian says:—"The common people themselves have, before all other, power either to choose worthy priests, or to refuse the unworthy." But now, forsaking the teaching of the New Testament, the key into your Church, to all its influence, and dignity, and power is the golden key of £ s. d. One who for four-and-twenty years, preached as a clergyman of the Established Church says:—

"When a patron presents a minister to a Bishop to be settled as the pastor of a church, the *Church* has no voice in the transaction. The Bishop is almost as powerless, for unless he can prove the nominee to be legally disqualified, he must admit him to the pastoral charge. That the nominee is offensive to the people, infirm, indolent, with little talent, slender theological attainments, and few virtues; that he is ill-tempered or eccentric; that he hunts and shoots, attends balls and plays cards, are no legal disqualifications."

All that a man then needs with you to become a clergyman, is the good things of this life, and if he have these, they open to him the door into the Church. He doubtless looks upon this as a call from God.

That men do go into the Church and become clergymen, called of God no doubt, but entirely deficient in any *fitness* for the office is patent to all. But lest you should doubt such a statement coming from my pen, I will quote what a clergyman (Dr. Taylor) said on a platform in

Liverpool not many weeks ago. Speaking of the ritualistic movement, he says :—

“For, observe, it is extremely congenial to human nature, this appeal to the senses and the imagination, and it is a rapid way to importance and to influence on the part of the clergy to make themselves of such importance as the prime leaders in the great ceremonial observances—the great actors in these scenes of posture and of imposture, if I may so call it (hear, hear, and cheers)—to be the prime movers in these pantomimic representations (laughter and renewed cheers). It is something very grand to be arrayed in the gorgeous dresses of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and to be preceded by little fellows in red clothes; and men who never could attain legitimate influence over their fellow-men by their intellectual powers (cheers); these men, if they were obliged to live by teaching and preaching, and prove that they were men of mind and intellectual power, and leaders and teachers of men, would never gain salt for their porridge (laughter), they would never gain power in that way; they find it a very rapid way to get power to assume the sacerdotal and priestly character.”

Sir, I confess my inability to understand how men who never “could attain legitimate influence over their fellow-men by their intellectual powers,” and who “if called to get their living by preaching,” would never gain salt for their porridge—can in any sense be said to be the *authorized* teachers of the people.

The *Daily Telegraph* gave, a little time ago, an accurate expression to public opinion on the style of preaching in the Church. It describes the sermons of the clergy as a mixture of *inanity* and *nonsense*. And if Archdeacon Denison is to be believed—and no man ought to know his brethren better—they have a greater disqualification for preaching. In a speech on this subject made at the Norwich Congress, the archdeacon said :—

“The clergy do not know their Bible, nor their Prayer Book, which is the exponent of the Bible.”

If the *Daily Telegraph* charges the clergy with want of brains, and one of your dignitaries with want of acquaintance with the Scriptures, where is the qualification to preach the Gospel? Surely when I hardly take up a Church newspaper without seeing sermons advertised, and know how large a trade is carried on in these articles—when I remember that one of our chief Baptist ministers years ago was solicited by a bishop to compose sermons for him—the bishop, I suppose, not being able to compose them himself—you will excuse me, if feeling that God has given me power to compose and to preach my own sermons, I fail to feel the point of the taunt coming from men who may, for aught I know, buy and preach somebody's else's sermons, that I am an “unauthorised minister.”

If, because I am a Nonconformist, I am accused of being one of those who set church against church, and altar against altar, let one who for years has lived in the very midst of the rising race of clergymen at Oxford, I mean the Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, give what I may ask you, Sir, to accept as some slight reason for my position; he writes:—

“Bishop after bishop, clerical journal after clerical journal, complains with perfect truth, that men of intellect are ceasing to present themselves as candidates for orders. The reason is pretty obvious. It is not that the spiritual profession has ceased to have attractions for highly gifted and highly cultivated minds, but that such minds, when combined with sensitive consciences, *refuse to bind themselves to a mass of heterogeneous Tudor dogmas*, which, after the discussions we have had on the subject, no human being can believe to be self-consistent, much less to be absolute and final truth. The consequence is a gradual deterioration in the intellect of the clergy, the *established* guides and instructors of the people, which cannot fail to produce a

corresponding effect on those under their influence, and to render their agency, in the long run, *injurious* rather than beneficial to civilization."

This is unwelcome truth to the Churchman, but the writer asks, in another moment—

"Who are your State Bishops? Are they, or *is it possible that they should be*, the honest, fearless leaders of religious thought, the real spiritual flowers of the nation? Are not such men more likely to be prosecuted for heresy than to be made bishops? Is not the first qualification of a State Bishop caution, the twin sister of cunning? And what effect upon the religious character do you expect from a system which makes caution and cunning cardinal virtues, and fearless honesty a disqualification, not to say a crime?"

From all of which it follows that I had rather be the schismatic and Nonconformist than enter into a Church of which such awful truths can be told. I may quote the words of Jacob—"O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

According to your teaching, I infer that you look upon it as a sin for a person to withdraw from the parish church. At all events, this has been taught in your parish clearly and fully. We are to understand that our home is the parish church, and that we cannot leave it without sin. I could give you many answers to this: let one suffice. As the people have no choice in the selection of a clergyman for any parish; as, in fact, the nomination is [absolutely in the power of the patron; it is obvious that very different men may preach in a man's life-time in any one parish. To-day men may go to church and sit under the teaching of a fearless evangelical minister—they may drink in the truth as it is in Christ, and to-morrow they may, by a change of the one who is "over them

in the Lord," go to church and witness all the mummeries and nonsense of a High-church clergyman. To-day the parishioners may have all they long for; to-morrow they may have forced upon them all their soul loathes in the shape of Romish superstition, &c. Yet they are powerless in the matter. They may protest, the protest is valueless; they may be indignant, and wounded, and heart sore, it matters not; the clergyman for the time being has it all in his own hands. In fact your churches are the clergymen's and not the people's. The people may go if they like; but they must bear and put up with all that their spiritual instructor chooses to inflict. So that in very rapid succession they may have evangelical teaching, then Broad-church teaching, then High-church teaching, and at last bald infidelity. What are they to do in such a case? Why, stop at church, of course; they have no right to *prefer* anything to what is offered them, and if they love Christ more than His so-called church, they are branded as schismatics, whom good people are to *avoid*, as they set "altar against altar and church against church."

Dr. Lowe said, when speaking in Liverpool,—

"He did not believe sacerdotalism was the religion of the Bible or the Church. He did not believe the Christian ministry was in any special senses a priesthood. He found the word "priest" applied first to the Lord Jesus Christ, and next to the whole body of the Christian people, but he challenged any one to find a place in the New Testament where the word was applied to the Christian minister. If we had priests—let us have our altar, our sacrifice, our incense, ourthurifers, and the priestly garments, the dalmatics, the albs, the priestly tunics, and such things. But if, on the other hand, we had pastors and ministers and teachers of Christ, these adjuncts of sacerdotalism, these penances and fastings and absolutions andthurifers and vestments were mendacious and mischievous mummeries which

should not be tolerated. (Applause.) He did not wish to speak disrespectfully, and he wished to speak far from uncharitably, of the gentlemen who laid claim to them, but he protested against their attempts to intrude their doctrines into this Protestant Church of England."

That Dr. Lowe is not without cause for speaking against those who would intrude Romish doctrines and practices into the Protestant Church, the events of almost every day go to prove. Let the following description, from a Church newspaper, tell its own tale :—

"ST. RAPHAEL'S, BRISTOL. This church was profusely decorated for the Easter festival. The window sills were neatly covered with moss, and in the centre were crosses, anchors, and wreaths in each alternate window. The pillars were encircled in wreaths of evergreens, in which were intertwined texts of Scripture. The rood-screen was neatly and chastely decorated with flowers, and on the top were arranged a number of exotic plants in bloom, alternated with wax candles. The reredos was richly ornamented, and contained a number of vases of flowers. The first evensong of the festival was sung at eight o'clock on Saturday night, and Holy Communion was celebrated three times on Easter-day. The first celebration was at half-past five, the second at eight, the third after the matins. At 11.45 the choir and clergy re-entered the church, singing in procession the hymn, "Jesus Christ is risen to-day." First came the processional cross, borne by a chorister; then the choir, two and two. Banners (one of them worked for the occasion by the Countess of Limerick), after designs by Mr. Godwin, were borne by some of the choristers. After the choir came the Rev. F. S. Cuyler, vested in a splendid cope of white satin, with crimson velvet hood, carrying a cross of silver, studded with jewels, mounted on a staff of ebony. This cross, a most costly work of art, has just been presented to the warden of St. Raphael's, to be used on solemn occasions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. After the Rev. F. S. Cuyler came the Rev. A. H. Ward and the Rev. R. Corbett, who officiated as deacon and sub-deacon to the Rev. J. M. Rodwell, rector of St. Ethelburga, Bishopsgate-street,

London, who was celebrant. The celebrant was vested in alb, stole, maniple and chasuble. The latter was of white moire-antique, with a curiously worked orphrey of blue, green, and gold. The deacon and sub-deacon wore albs and tunics. The procession was closed by two acolytes, in cassock and cotta. The service was sung to a harmonised arrangement of the *Missa De Angelis*, and interspersed with various hymns. The service was very imposing, particularly the chanting of the Gospel—here the sub-deacon passed from his place and held his book for the deacon, who stood facing north, chanting the sacred words—the ruler of the choir moving forward, attending by the acolytes (and bearing the cross) to the spot from which the deacon chanted. There was a very large congregation and a crowd of communicants, but the greater part of St. Raphael's people communicated at the eight o'clock service, when the rev. warden was celebrant."

Yes, alas! the time has come when, using the words of the Dean of Carlisle (Francis Close, D.D.), your very clergymen are "teaching blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

"It is no matter of surprise," he says, "that men of the world see nothing in all the complicated and gorgeous ritual, recently introduced among us, but childish ceremonies; marvelling much that persons of education, or even of common sense, can indulge in such puerile occupations. But let the Church look deeper into this matter, and she will discover beneath all this drapery the image of forbidden sacrifice—the treacherous introduction of that monster evil against which our fathers testified with their blood. The whole paraphernalia of modern ritualism is but a flimsy and transparent veil imperfectly concealing the deadly worship of the mystic idol beneath—the *sacramental deity*, the forbidden sacrificial system: it is this and none other."

The following is now part of Church of England teaching:—

"The Holy Communion is a sacrifice—an offering made on an altar to God. We offer bread and wine; these afterwards become the body and blood of Christ."

At the time of the "oblation" of the elements, the people are instructed to pray—

"That the Holy Ghost may come down on them and make them the body and blood of Christ."

"This sacrifice is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, *and is presented as a sin offering to obtain pardon for our offences.*"

"The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are really and truly present on the altar under the forms of bread and wine, and the priest offers the sacrifice to God the Father.

"We should *worship our Lord, present in His Sacrament*, as we should do if we could see Him bodily." *

But worse has yet to come :—

"When you enter the church, before you go to your place, bow reverently to the *Holy Altar*, for it is the *throne of Christ*, and the most sacred part of the church. Bow reverently to the altar before you leave the church."

"At the words 'this is my body, this is my blood,' *you must believe that the bread and wine become the real body and blood with the soul and Godhead of Jesus Christ*; bow down your heart and body in deepest adoration when the priest says these awful words, and worship your Saviour, then, verily, and indeed present on His altar."

Lastly, and most awful this, pray—

"Soul of Christ hallow me! Body of Christ save me! Blood of Christ inebriate me!"

When Binney said something about the Church of England ruining souls, all the land was stirred. Now I do not want a Nonconformist minister to say anything about it, for Dean Close says, and well says,

"The mischief is there; *it is in action; it is destroying souls.*"

* From the Catechism on the office of the Holy Communion. Edited by a committee of clergymen.

And well may the Archbishop of Canterbury say that the "Ritualists are men who are doing the work of the most dangerous enemies of the Church."

Dr. Arnold, writing to Judge Coleridge, October 23, 1833, said in his letter,

"What is to become of the Church? for the clergy begin to exhibit an aggravation of the worst superstitions of the Roman Catholics, only stripped of that consistency which stamps even the errors of the Romish system with something of the character of its greatness."

What would he have said had he lived to learn that no less than 3,000 clergymen have sent an address to the Archbishop deprecating any attempt to put down the ritualistic movement, and to hear the Archbishop's answer that "he confessed that he has witnessed, with feelings of sorrow, the TONE OF DEFIANCE with which the recently-introduced practices had, in some instances, been supported?" What would he have said could he have read the poem in the *Church Times* on the death of Keble, and find the last verse?—

"Not till his task was done, left he his post;
Not till cold hearts were kindled with God's flame;
Not till the banners of a mighty host
Came to the warfare in his Captain's Name.
Christ, Light Eternal, grant Thy minstrel rest,
And Mary Mother, lull him on thy breast."

Dr. Arnold's fears are being verified. Let the following advertisement be pondered over :—

"Mrs. Little's Ecclesiastical Warehouse, 20, Cranbourne Street, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C. Chasubles, dalmatics, copes, albs, surplices. girdles, &c., frontals, stoles, cases for visiting the sick and all church requirements. Gothic laces in all widths, and prepared designs for embroidery, also mediæval

Berlin pattern wools, canvas, &c. Complete sets of embroidery for chasubles, church candlesticks, vases, crosses and altar plate, gold and silver crosses, German prints of the stations, 8vo., 5s. the set of fourteen. Altar breads, altar wax, incense, &c. Easter decorations.

And add to this that, whilst souls are perishing for lack of the truth, the "successors of the Apostles" are buying in *the English Church* copes costing £70 each, that they may vie with the Romish Church in her gorgeous wickednesses and her soul-destroying idolatry.

I assure you, Sir, this is weary work for me; my very soul sickens at such truths as these. Goldwin Smith says that a "State Establishment is a standing organization of hopeless schism," and so indeed it seems.

I believe that, although the English Church has written and said most bitter things of Dissent and Dissenters, you have not long to live, Sir, before you find that there is *something a thousand-fold worse than our Nonconformity*, and that, too, nourished in your very midst. You may as a church, as indeed you are doing, seek to ally yourself with the "great whore of Rome," or with the degraded Greek Church; you may ignore the existence of the thousands and millions of Christian Dissenters; you may sow your literature broadcast wherever you dare; but, Sir, Dissent is too strong for you. Wherever there is business, steam, intelligence, and *thought*, Nonconformity is winning the day; and whilst in such districts as this, where much of the feudalism of other days and the terrorism of bigoted landlords exists, the Establishment may appear strong: with the advent of light, and political freedom, and an increase of intelligence, a very different picture will be presented. Remember that amongst those "who make their belly their god" and who are to be

avoided as setting church against church, are such names as John Milton, John Howe, John Bunyan, Baxter, Matthew Henry, James of Birmingham, Raffles of Liverpool, and a host of others who have gone to their reward; who, doubtless, unordained — unblessed by a bishop's hands—and unrecognized by the so-called Church of Christ, "schismatics" as they were, have nevertheless received the approbation of Him whose ministers they were, in the welcome, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Sir, it is your church that is the cause of division. You make a door that we cannot enter; you form an alliance that we cannot join in; you insult Christ by robbing Him of His glory, and then, forsooth, because we dare not thus act—because we seek to crown Him in our hearts, and lives, and teaching—because we have the fortitude and self-sacrifice sufficient to enable us to witness to the truth and protest against error—because at the risk of social position, pecuniary gain or worldly good, we take our stand upon what we know to be rock; therefore, a number of man-made ministers hurl at us the thunderbolts of their wrath, sarcasm, or hate; pervert and wrest Scripture in their denunciations of us, and understanding us little because they understand Christ less, dare to fix upon us the brand of "schismatics," and hold over our head the wrath of an offended and angry God.

As to the third point on which I have joined issue with you, I may say one word in explanation of my position. I do not deny the statement that Satan is the author of divisions in the Church of Christ, just as he is the author of every other evil under the sun. But this evidently is not what you wish us to understand by using the words, "Satan brings divisions amongst us." Viewed with the context, you mean that the Evil One is the

author of Nonconformity. You are not dealing with those who cause divisions in your own Church, but with us who set "altar against altar and church against church."

At first I felt unwilling to take the slightest notice of such a statement. It seemed so unworthy of a Christian minister to utter such a sentiment that I could hardly bring my mind to the task of dealing with it. And I do so now solely because I fear that you are not the only one who entertains such a notion respecting us. From time to time I am filled with amazement when I find what bitterness is displayed by clergymen in speaking and writing of Nonconformists. The openly profane man, the drunkard, the Sabbath breaker, the sinner of deepest dye does not call down such denunciations upon his head as does the sincere and godly Dissenter. Many Churchmen seem to imagine that Dissent is the greatest sin and evil in this country. To sin against God is one thing, to sin against the Establishment is another. The one can be pardoned, the other never. Let the man attend the race-course, or the public-house: let him be a "fast" and immoral man; let him swear or get drunk from time to time—no matter—he is not looked upon with such scorn and coldness as is the man who goes to chapel. Now is not this the very essence, the very marrow of bigotry? What clearer evidence do I need of distorted, narrow, one-sided views than I have in this fact. That I may not be charged with over-drawing this picture, let me quote what Churchmen and clergymen have dared to say—

"Dissent furnishes a rallying point for the disaffected and the self-willed in our parishes. It has wrought, and is working, vast and extensive evil, and *imperilling* to a fearful extent the *faith*, the *loyalty*, and the *moral and religious life* of our people.

"The precepts of the New Testament do not allow you to live

as a Dissenter. The laws of the country will not punish you for this great sin ; but, nevertheless, it is a great sin still.

“ ‘ We shall not be asked,’ says one, ‘ at last whether we were Churchmen or Dissenters.’ To this I answer, *Most certainly we shall.*

“ A man cannot forsake the Church (*i.e.* the Establishment), *but at the peril of his soul.*

“ The course from Dissent to infidelity is easy and natural.

“ The Dissenting minister is of man only ; and, therefore, the Dissenting communities, being destitute of a true ministry, are not churches of God.

“ Dissenting principles do not bear good fruit. On the contrary, it appears that where Dissent thoroughly prevails for some time, there the general character and tone of feeling are lowered in some considerable degree. The principles of Dissent tend of necessity to the luxuriant *development of self-conceit and spiritual pride.* *Nothing is now causing a greater hindrance to the extension of the kingdom of Christ ; nothing is causing a greater increase of infidelity than Dissent.*

“ In many Dissenters Satan even now reigns triumphant, causing them to vilify God’s holy Church (of course the Establishment), crying down with it ! down with it ! even to the ground !

“ Dissent is for the most part no longer synonymous with spiritually-minded religion, but with *revolution.* The last thirty years have seen the great bulk of English Dissenters transformed into a mob of intriguing political agitators, &c.

“ Let it be granted to the fullest extent that seventy-five per cent. of the population of Wales is placed for spiritual purposes under Dissent. Then a fair argument arises that the fruits of the system are reflective in the character of the Welsh population. But is not the principality notoriously inferior in morality ? Are not infanticide, illegitimate births, and affiliation cases in excess of the average of any other portion of the United Kingdom ? ”

But why quote more. Such is the way in which Dissent and Dissenters are spoken of by Churchmen. If all these things are true it is pardonable in you to believe

that the father of Dissent is the father of lies. If Dissent imperils faith, loyalty, religion; if it fosters pride, self-conceit, immorality, and uncleanness, and if it is the greatest hindrance to the spread of the Gospel; then I do not wonder at you, Sir, attributing it all to Satan.

But, Sir, I am at a loss for language strong enough to use towards those who thus speak or write about us. If such opinions are the result of ignorance, the writers ought to be ashamed; but if they are the result of prejudice and bigotry, then all I can say is, that such a style of writing is most disgusting. I can pardon ignorance, or weakness, or narrow-mindedness, but the spirit which will lead men to write such lies about Nonconformity, I must leave to Him who, in the final words of His Revelation, tells us where he is found "who loveth and maketh a lie." Allow me to ask you one question here: If Dissent is such a wicked thing, how is it that God has so marvellously blessed it? Thousands upon thousands—aye, thank God! tens of thousands have found their way to heaven through the conventicle and meeting-house.

Writers of a certain class in the present day are sharpening the Churchman's appetite for Dissenting scandal by false pictures of us. We are depicted as a lot of ignorant, proud, self-conceited fellows; our ministers are raw, untrained, and vicious; whilst Dissent is said to be upheld mainly by middle-class grocers, costermongers, cheese and butter factors, &c. If such works as the "Chronicles of Carlingford" thus depict us, what wonder that they who read such books should fall into most grievous errors. I wonder that it has not struck some sharp-sighted Churchmen that such descriptions are the greatest condemnation of the Establishment which it is possible to conceive of. Are not these novels an awful reflection upon the Establishment? Rich, powerful, fortified by a thousand bul-

warks, crowned by the mightiest genius and learning—this is the boast of the Church—how comes it that the ignorant, purse-proud, weak Nonconformists have come to occupy a place of equality with you? I need not press the question. You have had money, influence, position, the smile of the State, genius and talent, on your side; but we have had the *truth*, and, pointing you to what we have done in God's service—our missionary work, our Sabbath schools, and our glorious success in the salvation of souls—I may say as the secret of it all, "*Magna est veritas.*" The weapons of *our* warfare have not been carnal, but spiritual and mighty through God.

Lest, however, you should accuse me of being rash in denying the abominable falsehoods which are unblushingly written of Nonconformists, let others speak for me.

The *London Review* says :

"The Dissenting denominations, from their being more engaged in the practical work of the ministry than in the public discussions of the great questions of the day, do not present much matter of interest to come under review. Their separate contributions to the progress of religion, however, make no mean sum total. The fruits of their labours appear more in the building of churches, colleges, and chapels, in preaching, and in charitable organisations of various kinds, the amount of good done by which can only be properly represented by statistical tables. *Dissent, there can be no question, is on the increase, notwithstanding the great efforts put forth by the Church to prevent it*; and, looked at in a comprehensive point of view, it is perhaps well it should be so."

Lord Stanley says :—

"I believe that the balance of power which now exists between the Establishment and Nonconformist bodies is *not unfavourable to individual freedom of opinion and speech.*"

I apprehend Lord Stanley to mean that where the Establishment rules, individual freedom of opinion and speech is *not* found. His Lordship is quite correct. As I write, an instance comes to my hand. In the *Nonconformist* of April 25th the following appears:—

“Another matter to urge us to a quickened political action. More and more frequently of late we have heard of the petty persecutions of Dissenters in country districts. A case is reported this week from Shoreham. We have heard, often enough, of the children of Nonconformist parents being compelled to attend the services of the Established Church as a condition of obtaining day-school education, but we never heard that they are *flogged* if they do not attend Church—the flogging being administered by the incumbent himself. To save ourselves from the charges of exaggeration, we give the language of Mr. Hall, of the Drove, Portslade, Shoreham, on the occasion of the recent election of churchwardens in that parish. Our authority is the *West Sussex Gazette*:—

‘My principal object in calling you here to-day is to invite public attention to a disregard of the religious feeling of our fellow-parishioners, and to a cruel treatment of little children. That there may be no misapprehension as to the facts, I shall mention three cases that have come under my notice during the past week. Mrs. West, of Fishergate, had two children at the school, both under eight. She sent them, because required to do so, on Sunday mornings, at ten or thereabouts, to the school, after which they attended the morning service at eleven, at the parish church, a mile and a half from their home. It was impossible for these little things to get home before half-past one; and yet, because they did not or could not (having already walked three miles) attend the school and church again in the afternoons, they were beaten on two Monday mornings, and when the third flogging was due, Mrs. West removed them to the Church of England school at Hove. I do not know a more kind hearted or more Christian gentleman than the Rev. Walter Kelly, the manager of that school; and I need scarcely tell you that there the brutal treatment I have described is unknown.

There is a boy named Sheppard. He is fatherless; his mother lives in Adur-terrace. He was thrashed several times for not attending church, and told me, in the presence of the master, the day before yesterday, that four or six cuts with the cane was the punishment generally given by the schoolmaster for not being here on Sundays before going to church; but that if the boys had been to any Dissenting place of worship with their parents, the Rev. Mr. Parkes punished them himself, and much more severely. Joseph Child, carpenter now present, had a boy at the school. He wrote, requesting the master not to flog the boy for not going to church, and expressed a wish to take him with his own family to the chapel at Fishergate. This was positively refused in writing by Mr. Parkes, and the boy is now sent to church, against the father's conscience, that he may not be uneducated. I shall not, gentlemen (continued Mr. Hall), trouble you with any more instances; these things are not to be denied—the parents or masters of these poor children are all now present before you. I know of nothing more destructive to the interests of religion than thus to invade the sanctity and destroy the unity of a Christian home. A continual practice of this kind is a foul blot upon your character as a Christian community, and I ask you to do your utmost to remove it.' The correspondent, continues:—'The rector (Mr. Parkes), the schoolmaster, and all the managers of the school were present, and no one attempted to deny Mr. Hall's statement.'

"Does not Dissent in such a case become 'an affair of politics,' and is Mr. Hall, or are we, to be told that the less we have to do with such matters 'the better?' We understand that representations will be made to the Privy Council Office on this subject, and we hope that a more effective representation will be made before some magistrate. Garroters are now liable to personal chastisement; what should be done to a clergyman who will flog Nonconformist children for not going to his church?"

To return, however, to what Churchmen think of Nonconformity. Lord Ebury has said in the House of Lords—

"That more able ministers of religion do not exist than are to

be found amongst the Nonconformists; nor a more *loyal* and *devoted* people than they have *proved* themselves to be."

And yet the Rev. John Sandford, B.A., Archdeacon of Coventry (whom I have quoted), says that "Dissent imperils the loyalty and moral life of the people." Who is right? I know not how far you may be inclined to notice anything from Archbishop Manning's pen, but inasmuch as many in the Church of England are seeking union with the Church of Rome, you perchance will allow that what he says may have some slight weight in my argument with you. The Archbishop is honest enough to say,

"The piety of Dissenters is more like the personal service of disciples to a personal Master than the Anglican piety, which has always been more dim and distant from the central light of souls."

Does not the question spontaneously arise, How can the Evil One be so foolish as to be the source of such piety as this?

From a tract recently published at Oxford, and entitled "Defence of Church Principles," the following is worth something to us:—

"It may be said that there were Low Churchmen and Broad Churchmen at work during the last thirty years, and that some of the credit is due to them. I doubt it very much. All the work—the building and restoration of churches, the meetings of Congress, these schools, these new societies for helping the poor and for teaching them—all these things have been set going within the last twenty-five years, since the High Church party has been strong, and have been carried on by the High Church party in the teeth of opposition; and I think it right that the truth should be admitted. No doubt a great many good things are done by the Low Church party. There are the ragged-schools, the city missions, and similar movements; but every

one of these things has been set going by the Dissenters, and not by the Low Church party; and the Low Church party has taken up the work, and done a little, and taken all the credit. *They never began the work.* If you look at the lists of subscribers, at the names of the people at the head of these societies, and go back to their origin and their history, *you will always find they were Dissenters who set them going.* Now this is a great credit to the Dissenters, and we are quite willing to give them credit for what they have done; but what I do not like is to see the Low Church party take the credit for this work, *when it has done nothing but take up some of the cast-off clothes of Dissent and put them on itself."*

Last, but not least, as from a quotation which I have given some one has been bold enough to attribute the great numbers of infanticides, illegitimate births, &c., in Wales to the influence of Dissent, I subjoin the return of illegitimacy from the Annual Report of the Registrar-General for 1862. The following is the proportion of illegitimate children for every 100 children born:—

Wales	6·6	Herefordshire . . .	8·8
Sussex	6·6	Lincolnshire . . .	8·8
Berkshire	7·2	North Riding . . .	8·9
Cambridge	7·0	Nottingham . . .	9·1
Oxfordshire	7·5	Norfolk	10·6
Bedfordshire	8·3	Westmoreland . . .	10·7
Suffolk	8·2	Cumberland . . .	12·1

In all the English counties named, except in the North Riding, the Church Establishment predominates. Facts speak louder than words. In this our own county (Salop) where the Church rules, does not immorality so prevail that Mr. Meynell, not many months ago, was calling the special attention of the clergy to it. If my memory serve me, I think I am not making a mistake in this.

I must now close, Sir. How far what I have said may

accomplish what I desire, I know not. I leave it in the hands of Him whose cause I seek to serve. I have undertaken the task of thus addressing you without seeking advice of any one, instigated thereto simply by the feeling that your attack upon Dissenters was unjust, unmanly, and unchristian.

He to whose lot it would have fallen to notice your remarks, as a Nonconformist minister in your own parish, has by a mysterious providence been called away to that home where the words Churchman and Dissenter are unknown—to a home prepared for all faithful and holy believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe I could not pay a more brotherly tribute to his memory than by thus justifying the position he held in Prees, as the minister of a Dissenting congregation.

In all that I have said I have been viewing the Church of England as an Establishment supported, shielded, and, worse than all, *ruled* by the State. I am the last man to forget the thousands and tens of thousands of godly, earnest, and Christ-like men within the pale of your Church—men whose love and charity is so genuine and pure that they, instead of condemning Dissent as an unholy thing, and looking upon Dissenters as those who are to be persecuted or avoided, can say from the bottom of their hearts, “Grace, mercy, and truth be to *all* who love the Lord Jesus Christ.”

One of your most able defenders has set the trumpet to his lips and finishes his warning cry with the words,

“Work! work! work! ought to be the golden rule of every consistent Churchman. The National Church of England! take warning, the enemy are clamouring at the gates; take warning, O, ye English Churchmen and English Churchwomen, ere it is too late and they get within the fortress

You need not fear us as Nonconformists. We are *not* clamouring at your gates; we are content to sheathe our swords, and with bated breath watch one of the severest and sharpest struggles that the Church of Christ has for 1800 years known. The struggle now is *within* your fortress. Your foes are they of your own household. Bound as you have been by an iron bondage called "uniformity," so long as the Church of England was, to a large extent, devoid of spiritual life, you seemed to withstand every attack from without, and you pointed with pride and exultancy to this grand and noble edifice, hoary with age, with ten thousand holy associations clustering around it, the walls of the Church have seemed as though nothing brought against them could prosper. Ever and anon an outpost has been taken by the enemy, but the citadel has been untouched.

But just as the walls of our venerable abbeys, bidding defiance to the tooth of time, have nevertheless been shaken, and rent, and thrown down by the seed which the bird has dropped, so the seed of truth, of spiritual life, let fall here and there in the hearts of God's people among you is doing that within the Church which we could never do from without. The Church of Rome laughed so long as her enemies were outside; but when from within her pale such men as Luther arose, baptized with fire and the truth, and thus attacked her, then the sceptre of her power was snatched from her hand, her crown was ingloriously cast to the ground, and she, from ruling with an iron rod the nations of the earth, become the vassal of kings, the mere plaything and toy of earthly rulers.

And thus it is amongst you. Dissent may seem to you to be a monster most grim and stern. You are already split into factions and parties; divisions wide and deep as

the pit are found among you ; you have Shibboleths not a few ; your Ephraimites hate your Gileadites ; your High Church scorn your Low Church, and your Low Church detest your High Church ; your papers are full of anger, malice, and recriminations ; you have as many societies, missionaries and the like, as all the Dissenting bodies put together ; you have infidelity, heresy, and all manner of error in your very midst, and with these things patent to the world, instead of turning fiercely upon us, it behoves you, as it would become you, to look at home and to prepare for a coming storm, the portents of which the keen eye even now sees—a storm which will shake the Church to its very foundations, which will make the bravest heart to fear, and the strongest men to tremble.

If your Establishment be of God, then it will *stand*, and, as the mountain peak comes out more clearly and serenely after the storm has passed, so the Church of England, purified, sanctified, and strengthened, even by trial and darkness, will doubtless come forth fair and clear as the sun or as the moon. *But if it be of man*—if, as one of your own clergymen has written of it—if its “*prelacy is unscriptural, its formularies are erroneous, its discipline tyrannical, its claims arrogant, and its spirit worldly*, then I care not how long it has stood, by what support it is strengthened, by what genius, talent, and influence it is favoured—it may rear its head to heaven—it will be cast down to hell, for it is built upon the *sand* and not upon the rock.

I conclude with this prayer : All that is good, and pure, and sincere—all that is true, and noble, and Christ-like that is found amongst you, *may God bless it all* ; and everything that is uncharitable, and worldly, and superstitious, and false, and unworthy of the name of Christ,

and alien to the power of the Gospel and to the spirit of its Master, may heaven's deepest, speediest, and darkest curse and condemnation rest and abide upon it.

If you can say "*Amen*" to this prayer, you only ask what is asked by the lip and life of

Yours very truly,

J. E. YEADON.

Broughall Cottage, Near Whitchurch, Salop.

Oct. 1st, 1866.